

# SNAPLINE

FEATURED ARTIST: JINZHE CUI  
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2021.1 Slow Edition

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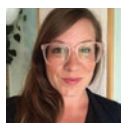
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## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The theme of Slow resonated far and deeply for many writers and artists at the start of 2021. After reviewing many more pitches than *SNAPline* has pages for, some strong connections began to emerge. Slowness, as a means for survival, slowness as an anti-capitalist strategy, slowness as a measure to heal deep fractures in our communities, institutions, our gardens, and ourselves. The theme also offered an opportunity to reconnect with Featured Artist Jinzhe Cui, who produced three new editions of hand printed woodcut images while visiting family in China. The completion of SNAP member Justine Jenkins' artist book *Ecology of Recovery* couldn't have been better timed, coinciding perfectly with Stacey Cann's proposal to write about the value of materials and acts of making beyond an endless drive to produce. I'm deeply grateful for Max Elwood's words and insights on what it will take to create true accessibility within our cultural institutions and art communities - the work ahead to be done and to keep coming back to and hold up as necessary when we begin to feel a rush to "return to normal". Taïessa's hand printed notes call out as a reminder for softness, for slowness, for repetition until maybe we get something right, maybe a lesson our plants have for us if we pay attention. Recurring over and over is a sustained and shared feeling of burnout across our community and communities, as echoed in David Gagnon Walker's piece (which is worth coming back to over a few reads, I have found): he asks "Are you all exhausted too? Jan Verwoert writes about a burnt-out community, a convalescent community, a community of the exhausted. Is that us? Could it be?" And, as if a salve for our collective feelings of burning out, Zach Polis offers us some poetic instructions for getting through with a tenderness and gentle humor I know will resonate with so many readers. I've enjoyed the slow and thoughtful pace at which we've brought this edition of *SNAPline* together. I hope you'll take your time reflecting on all it holds for you. Until next time,



**April Dean**  
Executive Director

# SNAP

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## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Slow ('slō) defined by Merriam-Webster's Dictionary as:

*1 moving, flowing or proceeding without speed or less than usual speed*

*2 low, gentle*

*3 lacking in life, animation, or gaiety*

*4 marked by reduced activity.*

The theme for 2021's first issue of *SNAPline* is Slow, which is a natural response to the last year we had surviving a global pandemic and all the trappings that come with that. Whether slowing down was forced or if stillness comes naturally, the adaptability and resilience of the SNAP community was demonstrated in spades, from our virtual events to our online classes to the drop-in (and socially distant) visits of our new Queen Mary Park studio, we thank you, dear reader, for your continuous support.

There is a kind of comfort in moving slow; how ink languidly drips from a brush, the satisfaction of a good, slow pull across the screen. It is in this space of intentionality that the board has been operating. As a board, we continue to focus on accessibility and representation for our members and the communities we hope to grow with. Our 2021 Call for Board Directors is still open on our website and anyone that identifies as Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour, 2SLGBTQIA+, disabled, low-income or working-class are encouraged to apply. Please don't hesitate to get involved.

We would love to hear from you. We are also reevaluating how our current SNAP committees function by using this moment of pause to connect with our networks and supporters to create committee groups that can empower our members and better serve our artists and communities.

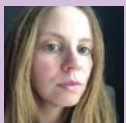
The opportunity to afford stillness is rare. It is in these moments where beauty and innovation reveal themselves, new points of views are considered and surprising connections made. As the newest member to the board, I am continuously impressed and inspired by the commitment of everyone at SNAP, my fellow board directors and our community members. As the slower pace of things inevitably begins to pick up, I feel confident that the board will adjust and move forward accordingly because that's what we all do - we adapt. I also hope that the knowledge and practices we've learned along the way will carry forward with us: finding comfort in discomfort and learning how to move a little slower, but with more intention, buoyed by the knowledge that we're all pulling through together.



**Lynda Vang**  
Board of Directors

COVER: Jinzhe Cui, *Look at a flower*, Woodblock Relief Print, Edition of 75, 2021.

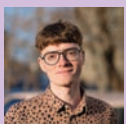
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**Stacey Cann** is a multidisciplinary artist and writer working in Montreal, Quebec. She holds a BFA in Print Media from Alberta College of Art and Design, and an MA in Art Education from Concordia University. She writes about contemporary art with a particular focus on artist-run culture, performative practices, and New Materiality. Her artwork involves durational elements whose mundane nature borders on the absurd, and she is interested in how we present ourselves in the commonplace of our daily life.



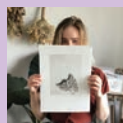
**Max Elwood** (any pronouns) is a white queer and disabled artist, caregiver, and community worker living just north of Amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton, AB). Their role in their communities is typically based around youth support and peer mentorship, accessibility coordination, and public education. They strive to work from a foundation of disability justice in everything they do, not only by creating work that aims to be accessible in a number of ways, but also by honouring their own access needs in their creation and work process. Instagram: frogs4brains



**Zach Polis** is a writer and former poet laureate. He is one of the Edmonton Public Library's Featured Writers for 2021. zachpolis.com



**David Gagnon Walker** is a writer and performer living on Treaty 6 territory in Edmonton, Alberta. He works at the intersections of live performance, literature, and participatory art. Recent performance work includes *Premium Content* (High Performance Rodeo 2020), *Everybody's Everybody's Autobiography* (Verb Theatre 2020), and *This Is the Story of the Child Ruled by Fear* (upcoming at Found Festival 2021). His writing has appeared in publications including *The Scores*, *The Quietus*, *Lemonhound*, and *Headlight Anthology*. Find him online at davidgagnonwalker.com.



**Taïessa** (she/her) is a multi-discipline artist living in Amiskwaciwâskahikan, so-called Edmonton. Taking an auto-ethnographic approach to her work, she explores themes of intimacy and nurturance. Her primary mediums include print, soft sculpture, and long conversations with friends. She obtained a Fine Art diploma with distinction from Grant MacEwan University before completing her BFA at the University of Alberta. Taïessa recently participated in the Mitchell Art Gallery's Artist Exchange program, and when not in the studio spends her time as Production Supervisor at The Works. Website: taïessa.com, Instagram: tai.the.girl

## Featured Artist: Jinzhe Cui



### Artist Bio

Cui Jinzhe is a multidisciplinary artist who lives and works in Edmonton, Canada. Her innovative, daily-life based pieces range from works on paper and canvas, installations to public art, which incorporate drawing, painting, contemplative actions, and multi-medium practice. Cui focuses on the artistic exploration that generates possibilities of self-observation, community reflection and cultural integration.

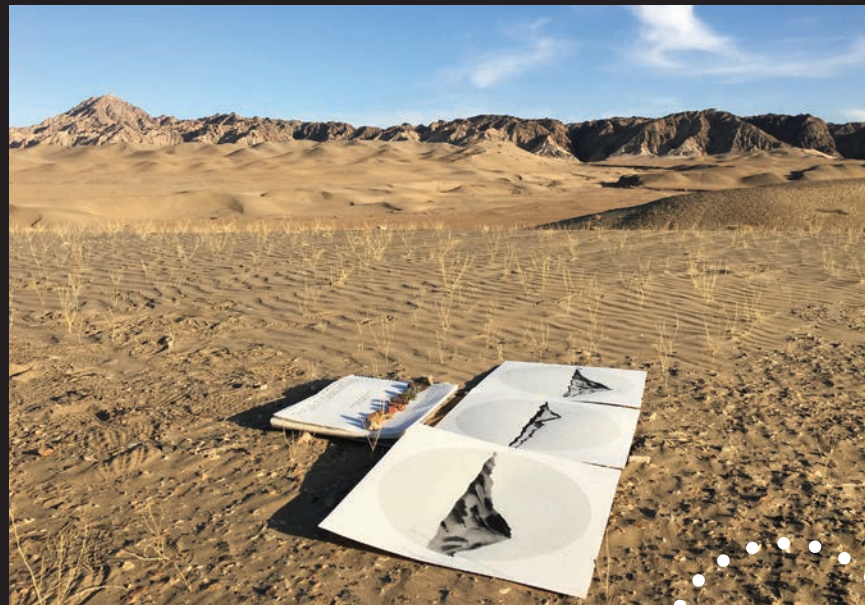




LEFT TOP: Jinzhe Cui, *Kiss a bird*, Woodblock Relief Print, Edition of 75, 2021.

LEFT BOTTOM: Jinzhe Cui, *Listen to a river*, Woodblock Relief Print, Edition of 75, 2021.

RIGHT: Jinzhe Cui, process image, roving and painting from the Sanwei Mountain.

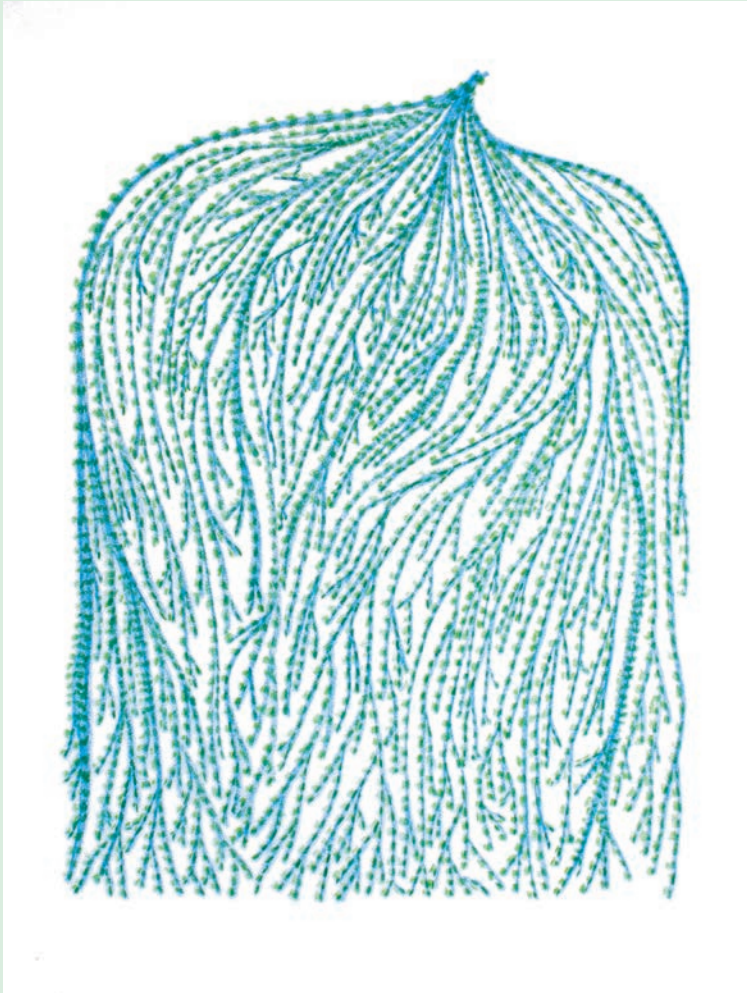


### Artist Statement

When we slow down to evoke an inside journey, such as eating an orange presently in the early morning; having a tranquil nap at the noon; dancing with a tree in the silent night, we all constantly generate artworks to the world as creativity naturally manifesting no matter we are among the people or living alone in the mountain.

The greatest artist creates masterpieces through studying how to thoroughly live a life.

# Slowing Speed



# & Sowing Seeds

## Thoughts on Creating an Accessible Artistic Community

Written by  
Max Elwood

I've always had a love for community. For a number of years I was quite the busy bee, zooming from one place to the next, visiting, volunteering, and taking in everything that Edmonton's 2SLGBTQ+ and artistic communities had to offer. However, that began to change as the symptoms of my disabilities worsened, with fatigue and mobility limitations taking me from flying across Edmonton to (what felt like) slowly crawling down a gravel road. Only as I felt my body slowing did I see how fast the community had been moving this whole time.

Balancing an ever-growing list of school projects with attending mandatory extracurricular events, volunteering in the community, applying for artistic opportunities, working multiple jobs, fulfilling my duties as a caregiver, and the simple desire to make art for myself became near impossible while also needing to take care of my health. I acknowledge that aspects of my circumstances are unique, but I also know that I'm not the only one who sees this laundry list of expectations

and knows it won't work (without working them to the bone).

Although not all of the things with which I've struggled to keep pace are within full control of our communities and organizations—grants and applications have deadlines, exhibition spaces are only available in certain time frames, universities have set schedules and program requirements—I also don't see accommodations being built in to mitigate the potential harms of these unchangeable factors. As a result, the thing that communities like this produce more than art or programming is burnout.

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**I know that many of us are all too used to burnout at this point, but we tend to just dust ourselves off and set off running again.**

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I know that many of us are all too used to burnout at this point, but we tend to just dust ourselves off and set off running again. But what about those who can't risk burnout? What about those who are perpetually



burnt out? The fact of the matter is, we move so fast that we don't even realize whom we're leaving behind. We don't build accessibility measures for people we don't see.

Knowing that the speed we move at is a barrier, what does slowing down look like? In the broadest sense, it means we stop treating our community like a racetrack and more like a garden. When my family members plan their gardens for the spring, they begin by taking stock of what they've grown before, what challenges they had previously, and what they want to try growing this time around. So let's take stock of our community, starting with what we've grown before.

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In our community, accessibility is presently in a rapid growth cycle! Although I've seen a slow integration of accessibility measures over the past couple of years, since the onset of COVID-19 it's taken on a new dimension and speed. Events moved online, meaning that those of us who can't always leave the house were able to engage with our community members in ways we previously couldn't. More care for access began to appear in online content, with image descriptions and captions becoming increasingly

more common. Workshops held online didn't even necessarily require attendance day-of, as they were recorded, available to fit into anyone's schedule, no matter their mental or physical capacity. In general, new ways to connect were sprouting left and right in the early days of the pandemic.

I'm concerned for the permanency of these sprouting accessibility measures. Every time the government loosens COVID restrictions, I see organizations rush at the chance to go back in-person, opening their spaces and holding some events offline. Such actions almost solidify in my mind the guarantee that when lockdown is over, those same organizations will be abandoning their current online work, which tends to be the most accessible their organizations have ever been.

Some might read that statement as pessimism, but for a disabled artist who discusses this issue at length with other disabled artists, it is just being realistic. The fact is, disabled artists and art patrons have been asking for more accessible content for years, without receiving much of a widespread response. The only reason that our community has had access bloom in this moment is because able-bodied, neurotypical<sup>1</sup> people are being affected by isolation and limited mobility in the same ways as disabled people—essentially, disabled people receiving access in this moment is a happy accident from our community's work to serve an able-bodied, neurotypical audience.



With this context of our racetrack-turned-fledgling-garden in mind, I want to dig into the challenges we've faced in doing that work. We can infer that disabled people and their access needs are being ignored, creating a communication gap between the larger artistic and disabled communities. Ignoring and silencing disabled people has resulted in a lack of access knowledge in the artistic community, leaving room for many able-bodied, neurotypical people to make assumptions about what access looks like, even assuming that access is much more widespread than it actually is.

In doing accessibility work for a variety of organizations over the past couple of years in Edmonton, I've found that (usually able-bodied) people are surprised when they find out the ways in which a space is inaccessible. This is especially the case if the physical location is one that has a ramp, an elevator, or is at ground level. The most typical base assumption of accessibility tends to be about wheelchair-related mobility, and yet even those needs are often left unmet. Assuming that access will just appear without any contemplation on our part

as community members means that the work of access isn't being done by more than the handful of us dedicated to the work. This is especially true because the defining feature of our community is creating artwork for people to engage with. Without an awareness of access, most artwork inherently has a limited audience, and unnecessarily so. How do we expect anything to grow if nobody has seeds to plant?

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**Many times disabled artists, including me, have entered spaces and asked about available accessibility measures and been informed that there aren't any.**

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The thought and consideration of a garden will not make one appear. Just knowing more about access isn't enough, as there is also the issue of the active knowledge of being inaccessible. Many times disabled artists, including me, have entered spaces and asked about available accessibility measures and been informed that there aren't any. This acknowledgement of inaccessibility tends to be phrased as an apology, framed in a way that confirms that those running the space do know

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<sup>1</sup> A combination of the words "neurologically typical," which refers to people whose brains are considered to be the "norm;" our expectations for how people are "supposed" to behave and react are based on this standard.

about their inaccessibility, they just haven't done anything about it. It's a strange form of virtue signaling to say, "we've thought about you, but we are not willing to put in the extra work to welcome you (yet)". This often grows into citing not having budget or support to do access work. The reality is, if you truly care about creating an accessible space as much as you say you do, you would write accessibility costs into your budget. If you truly care, you'll find grants to accomplish that work. If you truly care, you'll get your hands dirty.

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**Although I have started to unpack internalized capitalist values as a part of slowing down and meeting my body where it's at, I still know how consuming these values can feel.**

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If we're getting our hands dirty anyways, we might as well get to the root of the issue. For a community that has such a high proportion of self-identified anti-capitalists, so many of the processes we engage in as a community are just repainted, gallery-ready versions of those that capitalism has already built for us. We have internalized and continue to reproduce capitalist values. I've dealt with guilt for resting instead of using my time "productively", even in traumatic times (such as a global pandemic, for example). I've also felt pressure not only to define myself

by my work, but by my success in the communities I work in. Although I have started to unpack internalized capitalist values as a part of slowing down and meeting my body where it's at, I still know how consuming these values can feel. The pressure to keep up to these standards, along with the feelings of scarcity that capitalism invokes in us, impedes our ability to reimagine our community as an accessible one. These values often make those with power over our spaces, such as professors and executive directors, prioritize bodies and minds that can carry their own weight, because it's less complicated that way.

It's also important to remember that, in upholding these tenets of capitalism, we are upholding intertwined structures like white supremacy<sup>2</sup> and ableism<sup>3</sup>. Accessibility is not only a disability issue. Access is our unspoken promise of who we are willing to fight for: who we are willing to nurture to grow in our spaces. Let's reflect on what we want to grow as we build our garden in a world that will soon be vaccinated<sup>4</sup>.

We can't just throw seeds into a garden bed and walk away, expecting them all to grow perfectly on their own. Some will - there are some very resilient seeds out there! But why would we build communities based on resiliency and survival when we can build communities that allow us to thrive?

As I said in the beginning, the thing we produce more than artwork is cases of burnout. Being exhausted and cynical<sup>5</sup> all the time certainly limits our ability to create, if not limit our ability to live fulfilling lives that prioritize care for ourselves and each other. Imagine the ways in which we could show up for and support one another, both artistically and otherwise, if our worlds weren't being constantly uprooted by burnout.

With this in mind, I imagine a community built on intention and care, not on speed and ability. Intention means that not only access coordinators are thinking about making artwork accessible. We need to hear the voices of disabled, neurodivergent<sup>6</sup>, d/Deaf, and Mad<sup>7</sup> artists to guide disability-specific access work, while actively continuing to listen to and hear the voices of BIPOC, queer, trans and non-binary, and low-income artists to ensure our communities are as safe and accessible as possible.

I want to see more people engage with accessibility, starting with simple things like adding image descriptions and captioning videos on social media and artist websites. But I also want to see evolution and new developments in putting access at the foundation of artwork and community-facing programming, rather than tacking it on at the end.

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**I imagine a community where we have firm, healthy boundaries with our working artistic lives and our recreational enjoyment of it among our peers. I see us respecting the capacities of one another, supporting each other in the simple act of resting.**

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I imagine a community where we have firm, healthy boundaries with our working artistic lives and our recreational enjoyment of it among our peers. I see us respecting the capacities of one another, supporting each other in the simple act of resting.

But more than anything, I want this to be a community garden. There are dreams and possibilities for what our community can be contained within each of us - we don't need to solely pursue my dreams of access. As things reopen, I want us to slowly come together, sit, and plan this garden so that we can all bloom together.

PAGES 8,11: Alex Keays,  
Glen 01, Glen 06, 2021.

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<sup>2</sup> Jones, Kenneth, and Tema Okun. "WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE: Characteristics." Showing Up for Racial Justice - SURJ, 2001. <https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/white-supremacy-culture-characteristics.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Ambrose, Aaron, and Sebastian Margaret. "DISABILITY JUSTICE." Showing Up for Racial Justice - SURJ, 2021. <https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/disability-justice.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Romero, Diego. "Alta. Expects to Give 1st Dose of COVID-19 Vaccine to All Adults by End of June: Health Minister." Edmonton, March 4, 2021. <https://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/alta-expects-to-give-1st-dose-of-covid-19-vaccine-to-all-adults-by-end-of-june-health-minister-1.5333860>.

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<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization (WHO). "Burn-out an 'Occupational Phenomenon': International Classification of Diseases." World Health Organization, May 28, 2019. <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>.

<sup>6</sup> The opposite of the term neurotypical, this term refers to brains that are seen as being "outside of the norm" developmentally and/or cognitively, with differences being seen in areas such as learning, social skills, and sensory capacity. This term is often used in relation to the autistic community, but encompasses a wide variety of neurological experiences.

<sup>7</sup> This term is used to describe people with lived experience of mental illness and accessing mental health services, often identifying from a particularly political and/or scholarly leaning lens (ie. similar to the political undertones of the term "queer").



Images by  
Taïessa

PAGES 14-19: Taïessa, *When All the Good Feels Scarce*, Relief monoprint, handwritten notes, 11 x 13 inches, 2021.



My anthurium died in my last move.

More truthfully — one of my three anthuriums died in my last move.

When the first started showing signs of a losing fight with spider mites, I bought another to be safe. And when that second plant was still healthy, I bought a third. Just in case.



While scarcity is often defined in terms of economics, this sense that what we need or want is (and always will be) in limited supply punctuates more decisions than what feels comfortable to admit in my own life.

Anthuriums are only in season for so long, there are only so many residences to apply for, there is only so much good art within me to be ~~not~~ made. But are there really, is there really?

What maybe is the most reassuring aspect of scarcity is that it is often preceded by the word "artificial." We are conditioned to believe that the products of both our deepest desires and fundamental needs are not only in short supply, but also in high demand by others. A friend becomes a competitor. Accomplishments that we would rather be celebrating together make the hairs on our arms stand up with the fear that their success means lesser opportunity for me. We treat abundance like mythology. And at the same time, the term "artificial" erases the nuance caused by various intersecting identities and the social responses to them. Some are privileged over others, for whom resources + opportunities truly are made more scarce as late-capitalism succeeds in withholding equity by class, race, gender, and more.



During last spring's lockdown, as with many others who were privileged to do so, circumstance demanded that I slow down. Immediately, an urgency set in - telling me that this was the time I've always been waiting for, and as such, I must use it to the fullest. I quickly failed.

It would be untrue to claim that I have it sorted now, over a year later. What has changed is mindset.

What began as a forceful wrestling with the notions of productivity embedded within me shifting - now instead a pruning, tender and cyclical, as we go from here.





# Slowness as Recovery

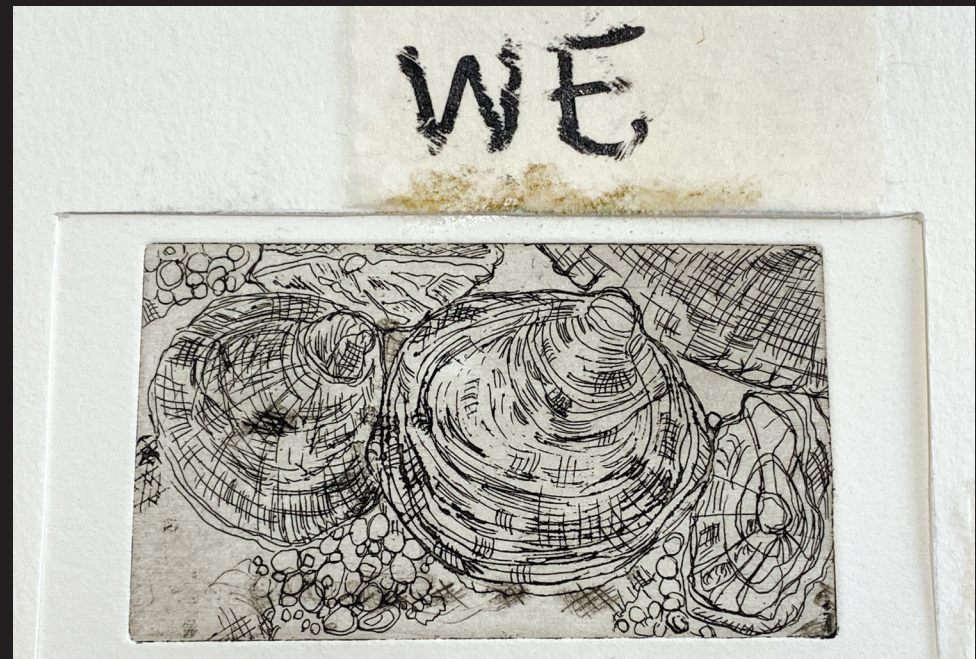
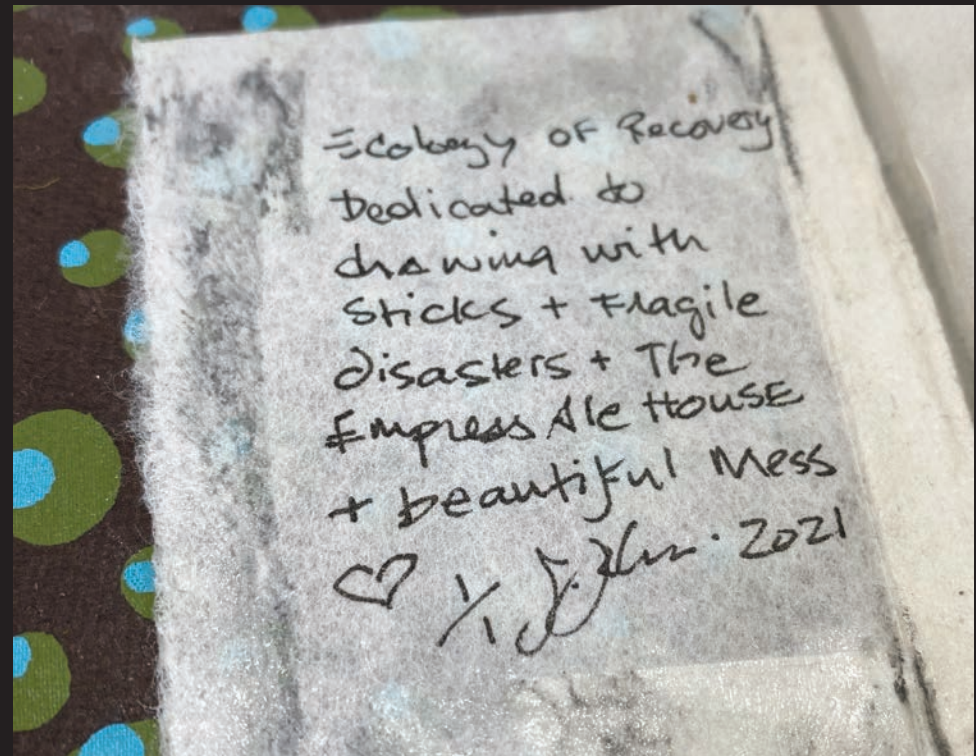
Interview with Justine Jenkins

Written by  
Stacey Cann

I recently sat down to talk about the intertwining ideas of slowness, capitalism, and process with artist Justine Jenkins. Deliberate slowness, a methodical approach to life, takes into account the unique nature of experience and relishes in noticing and taking time. For many, the pandemic has made them rethink their relationship with time and how they spend it. They are no longer able to do the things that they used to, and are exploring new ways to be in and think about the world. Slowness allows for reflection and discovery, time to build on things and appreciate their nature. Many have embraced slow practices during their time of isolation.

Slowness is in stark contrast with many of the ideas we have internalized from the capitalist society that we live in, that we must always be doing more, doing it faster, improving, accomplishing things, but what for? Slowness does not only ask how we do things, but it gives us the space and time to ask why we do things. As Justine and I explored her work *Ecology of Recovery* together we discussed slowness as not only an artistic process but as a way of being in the world.

RIGHT: Justine Jenkins,  
*Ecology of Recovery*  
(detail), 2021, images  
courtesy of SNAP.







LEFT: Justine Jenkins, *Ecology of Recovery* (detail), 2021, images courtesy of SNAP.

### Can you describe your work *Ecology of Recovery*?

The *Ecology of Recovery* is a book that is part of a larger project I'm exploring. An ecosystem is used to describe components in our natural world, and what I'm exploring in the book is human impact on the ecosystem and the intersection of longing, loss, and recovery, and the disconnection to and disappearance of place during the pandemic. The images are produced with a series of printmaking techniques, intaglio, etching, silkscreen and frottage processes. There's also a red ribbon in the book and a parcel of seeds, which when they're planted will assist with the process of recovery. The seeds are metaphorical, but also a literal part of recovery.

### This book is an edition of one. Is the unique object important to this work?

The idea of doing an edition of one was to create less waste. The creation of something that's compact and small, but still complex. Some projects can be quite complex, but not very large, the actual footprint of the project is very small. The uniqueness represents what's happening at this particular intersection of time.

### How does time and slowness relate to the *Ecology of Recovery*?

Slowness is forced upon us because of a pandemic, and it appears to be a disadvantage because of the way our society functions. We live in a hurried, capitalistic, accomplishment-based society. Slowness is an

antidote for our regular living; it creates a chance to turn inward and become more mindful about how we're approaching what we're doing. It creates a rhythm and ritual around exploring ideas which help ground us and that are a true reflection of what we want to do. It reflects the fact that people don't want to do things the way they used to, and perhaps this is a gate that's opening toward an antidote for a kind of frenzied panicked way of living. It creates a sense of meditation, and I think that it allows us to find our place in the world.

### In your process you gather things together which build bit by bit, organically over time. Can you speak to this part of your process?

The word gathering reminds me of nest building. It's a methodical but seemingly random process made from found matter, and although it seems slightly chaotic, it's nothing of the sort. It's quite deliberate. It makes you feel grounded in the sense that I'm going to leave this here for a while. It's not discarded, it's really important, but it has to just stay here for a bit and it's going to become something.

### The gathering, putting together, and accumulating is a way of marking time and a document of your presence in a place. How has isolation affected your thinking about your work, and in particular how time is marked?

You're in a situation where you're restricted. In that restriction, you can find some creativity, and that creativity is found in a rhythm. So that rhythm, the gathering, leads to slowness, because the pandemic is going to be here for a while. There's no sense of being frustrated or hurrying up to explore this. The positive effect of isolation is that it naturally creates the sense of rhythm in me that says: If I'm going to have to do this for a long time, and I'm going to be in the situation for the foreseeable future, then I have to focus on something that actually makes or marks something. Every day, you're still isolated. So then you're left with your own self, your own thoughts and your own ability to create something, and that creates a sort of methodical, slow process. It affords you an opportunity, you are not distracted by a capitalist busy making world where it's rush, rush, rush, perform, perform, perform, make, make, make, consume, consume, consume.

**You leave imperfections visible within your work. How does it relate to the processes and themes in your work?**

There's nothing slick about anything I do, I am not slick. If you want to recover from something it's not going to be all polished. It isn't hidden or cleaned up, none of this can be cleaned up. The idea of healing from something is a fallacy, you don't actually heal, you carry it with you. People often don't see the things behind those scars, but the scars stay with you and they form who you become, how you interact with your world and the work you create. If someone sees the

imperfections, maybe it gives them permission to realize it was all an illusion, it doesn't matter if you leave it there. The flaws don't matter, and whatever that flaw is there's a beauty in that flaw. There is a tear in the seam of the fabric of our living and you can see it, and it's okay.

**Ecology implies a connection and interdependence between organisms and things, how do you feel that your ecology has affected this work?**

Some of the images that I've produced in the book, reflect my connection to personal places, and within the context of the pandemic I can't go there, or the place has been lost. How does this isolation affect us, not only physically, but also emotionally? We have lost a sense of place and our sense of identity is tied to a sense of place.

It is also a comment about the disconnection from our living world in the sense that we are part of the larger ecosystem. A couple of my etching plates are images of the earth and how the earth really heals itself, and the implication of human impact on the planet. The pandemic is creating a positive effect. The lack of movement of humans is creating a positive effect on our living world, our natural environment. What's happening to the reclamation of spaces for other organisms in our natural space? For example the migration of animals in spaces where there's normally humans, or there's so much pollution and now there's less pollution, what does that really mean for physical and environmental recovery? That's a big huge lightbulb for humanity.



Other intaglio images reflect the tide pools: a place and ecosystem I wish I could journey to see. The frottage images were created at the beloved but now closed (because of the pandemic) Empress Ale House. I miss these places.

**The pandemic may allow us to restart, to break our patterns. How do you see the idea of slowness fitting into a new post-pandemic reality?**

I'm hoping slowness or thoughtfulness or mindfulness becomes permanent, instead of having an auto response to constructs that have developed. There's a reason for the constructs but I don't know whether or not people ever agreed with them or felt that they had no choice in the matter. I think that a lot of people are doing things deliberately in response to

the situation and saying, I don't want to do this anymore. I had all of this taken away from me and I don't want to do it anymore. It's permission to say, great don't do it anymore. Don't live that way anymore, don't answer the questions in the same way. Don't do it that way because everyone else thinks you should do it that way. I think of recovery as a more mindful process. I think slowness creates a situation where we can slow down a little bit and think about what's going to happen here instead of having to respond the way we've always responded.

TOP: Justine Jenkins, *Ecology of Recovery* (detail), 2021, images courtesy of SNAP.



# Sitting with Ceramic Stone

Written by  
David Gagnon Walker

Cultural theorist Jonathan Crary writes persuasively about what he calls 24/7 capitalism<sup>1</sup>, the condition in which every moment of our lives can be reified and monetized by digital networks of production and consumption. This absorption of everyday life into the network has altered our perception of reality in many ways, not least of which is its coercive tendency to “eliminate the useless time of reflection and contemplation.”

Alberta intermedia artist Alex Linfield’s work engages similar questions about digital media’s impact on our perception and our lives. I own one of his sculptures, which originally appeared as part of his exhibition W Y S I W Y G

at NSCAD University in Halifax. For this edition of SNAPline, I proposed to spend a day sitting with the piece in “reflection and contemplation” and to transcribe what passed through me as I did. The following text is the result of that process.

**The image of the rock  
cannot possibly provide  
the same experience  
the object holds, just as  
the object in some small  
respects ceases to be  
whole once its virtues are  
able to exist elsewhere  
simultaneously.<sup>2</sup>**

**- Alex Linfield, W Y S I W**

<sup>1</sup> Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, 40.

<sup>2</sup> Linfield, *W Y S I W Y G*, 37.

I’m sitting with the image  
of a stone.

It’s a sculpture by Alex Linfield.

It’s made of hollow slipcast ceramic, airbrushed to look like a granite stone. It’s pretty remarkable, how much it looks like a granite stone.

It’s like a photocopy of a granite stone.

It’s like a black and white photocopy of a granite stone.

Granite, of course, is often already black and white. But here somehow the black-and-whiteness is amplified. Maybe because I know it’s a copy. Although from a distance I’m not sure you would.

Alex is a friend. The sculpture is very realistic and I think he did a good job.

Good job, Alex.

I’m sitting with the image of a stone.

It’s made of hollow slipcast ceramic and it looks like just a black and white photocopy of a black and white granite stone.

Would Alex object to my calling it a deepfake of a stone?

Deepfakes, of course, are virtual. They’re the incursion of the virtual on what we think of as the real.

(Although that real still comes to us through a screen. Deepfakes are video. You might be reading this on a screen, too. Or maybe you got the print copy. Is that different? How?

Does it matter that before typing this up I wrote the first draft by hand? Do you believe me? Do you care?)

This stone isn’t video. It’s sitting on my desk by the window in the attic of the house I’m subletting by the river in the town where I was born.

This stone isn’t made of pixels but this stone isn’t a stone. It’s a very good copy, made of hollow ceramic, of a stone.

Alex says virtuality has to do with essences.<sup>3</sup>

Etymologically, “virtual” as in “virtue” as in “nobility, ideals”.

So virtuality springs from the realm of ideals. Although the virtual is not the thing, and it’s not made of the same things that make up the thing, it contains the essential properties of the thing.

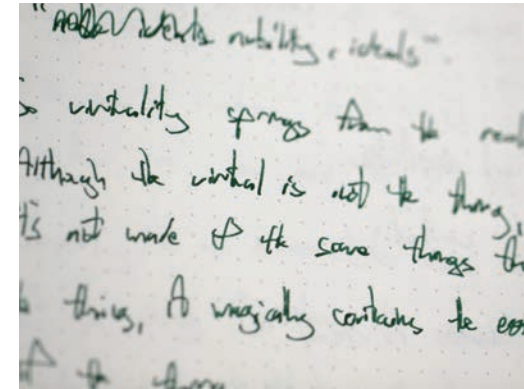
This stone isn’t made of pixels and it isn’t on a screen, so it isn’t a deepfake of a stone. But, it contains the essential properties of a deepfake – the incursion of the image of a stone into the real world of my desk by the window in the attic of the house I’m subletting by the river in the town where I was born.

So, it’s the image of a deepfake with the essential properties (the incursion of the virtual in the real) of a deepfake, without being made of the same stuff (pixels) as a deepfake.

So, it’s a virtual deepfake.

<sup>3</sup> Linfield, *W Y S I W Y G*, 36.





So, it's virtually virtual.

So, does that make it real?

(What the hell am I looking at here?)

I'm sitting with the image of a stone  
(with the virtual deepfake of a stone).

What's brilliant about this stone is how it abstracts virtuality from the virtual. It makes the virtual real, and it makes the processes behind the virtual visible. To a point. These things are always fugitive, and will always slip away from you whenever you try to grasp them. This work makes that visible too. It shows us how we see, and it lets us glimpse (in an incomplete way that's constitutive of the thing it's trying to show) the blind spots and limitations in how we see. W Y S I W Y G. What You See Is What You Get. It's breaking my brain a little to sit with this stuff. I think that's probably the point.

Good job, Alex. I'm glad you're my friend.

I'm sitting with the image of a stone.

It's a virtual deepfake of a stone, which is to say it's a fake stone in real space, really sitting on my real desk (by the real window in the real attic of the real house I'm really subletting by the real river in the real town where I was really born).

It's made of hollow slipcast ceramic, airbrushed to look like a granite stone.

The hollowness is important.

It's the most surprising thing about the object, and what most distinguishes it from a real granite stone. It looks like it should weigh forty pounds. Then you pick it up and it weighs, idunno, four? The piece is called Superficial Weight. Probably I should have mentioned that earlier. Sorry, Alex, for not mentioning that earlier.

What the image of the stone has in common with a granite stone is we can't see what's inside them. Where it differs from a granite stone, I assume, is the nature of what's inside.

(Is what's inside a thing an essential property of the thing?)

Of course I suppose I can't know for sure.

I'm sitting with the image of a stone  
(with the virtual deepfake of a stone).

It's made of hollow slipcast ceramic, airbrushed to look like a granite stone.

It looks terribly heavy and is in fact surprisingly light.

Also:

It looks terribly sturdy and is in fact surprisingly fragile, delicate, brittle.

I keep learning this the hard way.

For example: when I carried it up from the living room to the attic to start writing this text, I chipped a little piece off the top of the stone. I'm not even sure how it happened.

It must have just been the pressure of my fingers, or the vibration from setting it down on the desk.

I did something similar the day I brought it home.

Sorry, Alex, for chipping your sculpture. Although in my defense you didn't make it nearly as sturdy as a stone.

(Is the sturdiness of a thing an essential property of the thing?)

The fragility feels true to the virtuality of the stone.

Remember it's a virtual deepfake. And deepfakes are digital. And the digital, you may have experienced, is a fragile, impermanent thing.

Have you ever had something go wrong with your laptop, your email, your Wi-Fi, your phone?

More evidence that the digital is a fragile, impermanent thing: I've been learning guitar, and my fingers hurt: fragile. And, one day I'm going to die: impermanent.

(Alex likes to make this connection, between "digital" and fingers. More etymology.)

After I chipped the sculpture carrying it upstairs this morning, I picked up the piece that had chipped off the top, found the gap in the paint where it chipped from, and delicately put it back in its place.

Magically, it stuck there.

Magically, I can't find the spot anymore. I'm trying right now and I can't.

It was absorbed back into the image.

The seamless virtual virtual stone.

I'm sitting with the image of a stone (with a seamless virtual virtual stone).

It's made of hollow slipcast ceramic, airbrushed to look like a granite stone.

It looks terribly sturdy and is in fact surprisingly fragile, delicate, brittle.

My sitting with the image also feels fragile, delicate, brittle.

My presence, my capacity for real sustained presence, feels fragile, delicate, brittle.

My capacity to let my mind wander feels fragile, delicate, brittle.

(Those sound like opposites but I don't believe they are.)

I want to focus on the stone and let my mind wander and track where the wandering goes, and it's like the wandering hits a wall.

Like I need right away to be distracted.

Like something terribly painful might be just about to happen if I can't right away be distracted.

Like the mind isn't sturdy enough to let itself really be bored. Like it's not sturdy enough to trust itself to really let itself wander and really see where (what feeling? what memory?) it goes. It's exhausting to be so fragile. Are you all exhausted too? Jan Verwoert writes about a burnt-out community, a convalescent community, a community of the exhausted. Is that us? Could it be?

(Is the sturdiness of a thing an essential property of the thing?)

This is another blind spot in how we see.

These blind spots aren't neutral.

There's money to be made creating them and there's money to be made exploiting them. We know who's making this money.

Which apps do you use on your phone?

I'm sitting with the image of a stone.

It's made of hollow slipcast ceramic, airbrushed to look like a granite stone.

I think the Rockies are made of granite.

Are they? Does it matter? Would Alex object to my thinking of the mountains when I'm looking at his image of a stone?

A magpie cleaning its feathers, totally absorbed in the task.

I'm sitting with the image of a stone.

It's made of hollow slipcast ceramic, airbrushed to look like a granite stone.

The hollowness is important.

My sitting also feels hollow.

My presence also feels hollow.

I believe hollowness is good. I believe emptiness is good. Emptiness can be truth and beauty and peace and space. But it won't be if you can't let it be empty. It won't be if you keep trying to fill and fill and fill.

(Is what's inside a thing an essential property of the thing?)

What the image of the self has in common with the self is we can't see what's inside them. Where it differs from the self, I assume, is the nature of what's inside.

Of course I suppose I can't know for sure.

The sun is setting now. It was high in the sky when I started.

I'm sitting with the image of a stone.

The self feels fragile, delicate, brittle.

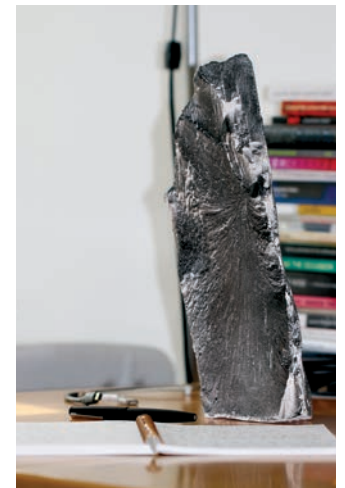
It's exhausting to be so fragile. Are you exhausted too?

I'm sitting with the image of a stone.

The self feels hollow. I'm trying to let it stay that way.

I'm trying to see my own seeing.

My friend is showing me how.



# Follow These Instructions\*

*Author's note: It's not always clear how to navigate a pandemic. Especially when you're in one. Through consultation with artists, a set of useful instructions has been devised for your benefit. Please note you may confidently play out the rest of the pandemic with these bankable tips.*

## CATFISHED (For Andrew)

Written by  
Zach Polis

Brush away the loose shavings.  
The ouija board is finished.  
Your best woodcut yet.  
Ask it about the late aughts.  
It will respond: "Jersey Shore."  
Soften your mind. *Think a little less practically for a minute.*  
"Ok, what the hell am I going to do today?"  
"Jersey Shore."  
Get in a petty argument.  
You're not like that.  
"Jersey Shore."  
No, really stop it.  
"Jersey Shore."  
You're freaking me out.  
"Jersey Shore."  
I SAID STOP!

—

You call for help, but no one answers.

You feel a *presence*.

The Ghost  
of Jersey Shore  
is *here*.

This house was never  
yours to begin with.

It was always an MTV crib  
for a demon.

## CREATIVE PEP TALK

(For Haylee)

Bike around as few cars as possible.  
BE TERRIFIED OF TRAFFIC.  
Watch Schitt's Creek from start to finish.  
Avoid Jasper Ave.  
Winter is the hardest part.  
THE HARDEST PART.  
The phrase  
"THESE DAYS" by Nico  
will come in handy.

Sometimes life gives us second shots.  
If you have a second shot at winter:  
Buy a car. And winter boots.

BE THE ONE IN THE CAR  
WITH WINTER BOOTS.

These days,  
stick to people you know.  
AND YOUR ARCHIVE OF THOUGHTS.

These days,  
watercolours are uncomplicated  
and will set you free.

If you do not have a driver's license,  
GET ONE.

Watercolours are your thing now.  
Don't overcomplicate this.  
Forge a fake ID.  
DO IT. NOW.

These days,  
you can make a very convincing  
valid driver's license  
with all your watercolours.

WITH SUPREME CONFIDENCE,  
KNOW THAT  
YOU CAN GET ON THE ROAD,

BECAUSE YOU ARE A DREAMER...  
(who drives)  
WHEREVER THAT DREAM ROAD TAKES YOU.

## UNCLOSED TABS

(For Morgan)

Screenshot all your unclosed tabs.  
Recite it like a map.  
It will be impossible to get lost  
in the bamboo forest.  
Your path is a gentle wind now.

You will remember the way  
to IMDb  
and the cast  
of Crouching Tiger,  
Hidden Dragon.

Next week, this open tab  
might change you.

You need those tabs.  
You don't know why.

You do not need those tabs.

Clear your tabs.

We are always changing –  
direction.

Open yourself  
to a field of grass  
and move like wind  
towards endless sky.





### THE VACUUM ORB

(For Pauline)

High Fantasy is your only escape.  
You are a queen.  
Who wins at Mario Party –  
EVERY TIME.  
Do not let others  
cast spells of doubt:  
Sacred Queen of Mini Games  
is a birthright.  
Use the Vacuum Orb  
NOW, NOW, NOW,  
against those closest to you.  
*Whose coins were they  
really?*

### MEDITATION FOR PLACES AND THINGS

(For Luke)

Home gets away from you.  
Don't contemplate it.  
Don't think about it.  
You will become obsessed  
with the family china  
and how it defines you.  
You will spend a lifetime  
tracking down  
all the porcelain plates  
in a never-ending quest  
to become shiny and transparent.

Your gaze will become fixed.

Is this a psychic investigation  
you really want to take on?

Is this a meditation  
you will think about  
for the rest of your life?

### SCI-FI BLENDER

(For Brianna)

It's the near future.  
Self-care is in.  
For those who can afford it.  
The setting:  
POST-APOCALYPTIC TORONTO.  
The city is overrun:  
WITH RACCOONS  
and an underground network  
of interlocking root systems.  
PEACHES, APPLES, KALE  
grow wild through the ONCE GREAT,  
but now VACATED CITY.

You are an ARBORIST  
who refuses to leave –

Despite the GREAT FLOODS  
and TERRIBLE WARMING.

You know the raccoons are dangerous,  
but they know something you don't.

You are trying to solve *a mystery*.

A beacon flashes.

Your sister.

*...On the other side of the city?*

The commute will be dangerous.

The Age of Tech is over.  
Even the Age of Raccoons is fading.

The Mycorrhizal Network is gaining power.

Will you brave the deadly sentient fungi,  
work collaboratively with the raccoons,  
and save your sister from impending doom,  
while unlocking the secrets  
of your arborist past?



### THE COMPLETE PEANUTS

(For Sergio)

Ignore the Instagram algorithms.  
Forgo any offerings of:  
"The Complete Peanuts Comic Sale, up to 50% off!  
Offer ends today."

26 volumes!  
Spanning from 1950 to 2000!  
And that doesn't count the Sunday strips!

Sale: *digital only*.

You know there is a better way.

Dust off all  
that is right  
and musty.

Stack the yellow newspapers  
high above you –  
block off access  
to your apartment hallway.  
Get used to the risk  
of dying by tonnage  
at any moment.

That's how you read a Peanuts strip!

Anything less is pedestrian consumerism.

### TRAGIC POTATO BACKSTORY

(For Mindy)

Lose your potato peeler.  
The best one. The one with the  
ergonomic grip.  
You will come to know:  
Grief is unshakable.  
Potatoes will be your heartache.  
Learn to accept this.



# SNAPline 2021.1:Slow

FEATURED ARTIST: Jinzhe Cui

## IN THIS ISSUE

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## PRIZES

**1<sup>ST</sup> PLACE** \$150 Honorarium,  
Publication in 2021.2 issue, and  
1 year SNAPline Subscription  
*postage paid within Canada only*

**2<sup>ND</sup> PLACE** \$75 Honorarium,  
Publication in 2021.2 issue, and  
1 year SNAPline Subscription  
*postage paid within Canada only*

**SHORTLIST** publication online at  
[snapartists.com/snapline/](http://snapartists.com/snapline/)

## SNAPLINE

### FLASH FICTION

## CONTEST

SNAPline invites you to submit a story of 500 or fewer words to our 2021 Flash Fiction Contest, with the winner and runner-up to be published this summer in our 2021.2 issue. The 2021.2 theme is "Public / Private" and we are seeking encapsulated narratives that reflect on what is revealed and what is hidden in the world around us. Your entry must take the embroidered crest patch *Pill Deer with Finger Legs* by Cindy Baker (pictured) as a starting point. There is no entry fee. Please submit entries **no later than June 01, 2021**

Every contestant (who gives us their address): a free copy of SNAPline 2021.2 in the mail!

TWITTER:@SNAPgallery | INSTAGRAM: @snapgallery | FB: Society of Northern Alberta Print-Artists

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